

## THE HOUSE PLUNDERED.

FAULTER IN NEARLY \$100,000.  
LAST SEEN IN WASHINGTON ON SATURDAY—  
CONGRESSMEN LIKELY TO LOSE THEIR  
SALARIES FOR NOVEMBER—THE  
CRIME MADE EASY BY LOOSE  
BUSINESS METHODS

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE TRIBUNE.]  
Washington, Dec. 5.—Just as the House of Representatives was about to begin business this morning, a tardy member, J. H. O'Neill, of Indiana, having first been sworn in and taken his

seated on the Democratic side, those who could look down from the gallery on the presiding officer's desk saw the Speaker toying nervously with a sheet of paper which had been handed up to him by one of the Clerks's force. On the sheet was a brief message, which looked, from a distance, as trivial and unimportant as a private pension bill. But the Speaker read it over twice, and his face grew disturbed and anxious. The House

was in good spirits, and a hum of conversation rose from the benches on both sides of the chamber. Nobody seemed to have an inkling of what was coming, and the shade on the brow of the Speaker passed quite unnoticed. The note was sent down to be read, and in ten seconds one

could have heard a pin drop, on the floor or in the galleries. The biggest sensation the Capitol has known for years in the way of defecations was sprung without a warning; and, almost before the members of the House themselves could realize it, the news was flying through the corridors that the cashier of the Sergeant-at-Arms' office had defecated, here.

ance had had, with between \$75,000 and \$100,000 of the House's money, and that nearly all of the Representatives would lose, in consequence, their November salary. The retiring Sergeant-at-Arms, John P. Leedom, of Ohio, had himself sent the note to the Speaker's desk. It read thus:

I regret to report that C. E. Silcott, late cashier of the

Office of the Sergeant-at-Arms, has departed from this city without settling his accounts; and I have been unable to ascertain his whereabouts, and there is a deficiency in the cash of the office. In view of these circumstances, I respectfully request an immediate investigation of my accounts, under such action as the House of Representatives may take in the premises.

When the House had recovered from the surprise of the disclosure, the following resolutions were adopted:

prize and consternation into which it had been momentarily thrown. Mr. Adams, of Illinois, moved that an investigating committee be appointed, and the Speaker named Messrs. Adams; Stewart, of Vermont; Payne, of New-York; Reed, of Iowa; Holman, of Indiana; Blount, of Georgia, and Hemphill, of South Carolina. The House will not meet again until next Monday, and then

The extremely loose business methods tolerated by the House in all its dealings with the Sergeant-at-Arms's office made defalcation easy and tempting for Silcott. It has been the custom for the Sergeant-at-Arms to draw the monthly pay of the Representatives, each member giving a

receipt in advance, certified by the Speaker or the Clerk, to be presented at the Treasury. The salary becomes due on the fourth day of each month, but the Sergeant-at-Arms, or his cashier, has generally been permitted to get the receipts cashed from three to eight days in advance. Most members keep an account with the office, and have their money sent to them after each session.

and have settlements when they wish, the Sergeant-at-Arms doing a sort of private banking business of over a million a year, but giving a bond of only \$50,000. Silcott, Mr. Leedom's cashier, had the run of all these disbursements, and used to go in person to the Treasury to get the monthly receipts cashed. This time he went earlier than usual. The total of the members

On November 27 Silcott took certificates for about \$36,000 to Treasurer Huston. He explained that the office had no balance on hand, and that Representatives were beginning to draw on him. He asked, as a special favor, to have the \$36,000 given to him then. This was done, and

On November 29 he came back and got \$36,000 more. The next day he drew \$60,000, delivering all the remaining certificates. No member could draw on the office until yesterday, and there was nothing to prevent Silcott's starting for Canada, if he wanted to, with all the money and three days' leeway. He did start last Saturday night, going over to New York, where he telephoned

The guileless Sergeant-at-Arms feared at first that his trusted cashier had been "sand-bagged" in the metropolis. He waited for a day, and then began an investigation. He learned that Silcott had drawn out his own account in a local bank

before leaving town. Then he went up to the Capitol and looked at the books and in the safe. The books showed that the cashier had charged up about \$72,000 more than there was cash to balance. He also took \$10,000 from the safe belonging to the Sergeant-at-Arms. How much more he embezzled will probably not be known.

until a thorough investigation is made. About \$30,000 in cash was discovered untouched in the paying teller's box in the safe. Silcott could have taken this, but, as some experts think, left it behind to avert suspicion for a day or two.

The bulk of the loss, of course, will fall on the Sergeant-at-Arms. His bond, for \$50,000, is signed by ex Representative David R. Paige.

of Ohio; ex-Senator Camden, of West Virginia, and Charles Fitton, of California. Silcott also is under \$50,000 bonds, among those who signed for him being ex-Representative John T. Wilson, M. A. Blair, Samuel Drennon, and R. H. Ellison, of Ohio. Mr. Leedom telegraphed to-day to the cashier's bondsmen, and will try to meet him

obligations as promptly as possible. But the numbers of the House will have to do without their salaries for the present, and may not get a part of the November payment at all. An unfeeling world may smile at their predicament, and it is true that Congress can make good the loss in the next Sundry Civil bills; but Silcott's

light will leave many members in an embarrassing and annoying plight. Some of them have already drawn on the \$400 odd due yesterday, and these who have been banking with the Sergeant-at-Arms may suffer other losses.

Congressman Butterworth, for instance, left a sum of money the other day with Mr. Leedom to run a bill, and he doesn't know now but that he

to pay a bill, and he doesn't know how out there he will have to pay the bill over again. It is said that Mr. Rife, of Pennsylvania, had \$2,500 on personal deposit with the Sergeant-at-Arms, and may lose it. Other members who, it is stated, put money into Mr. Leedom's hands for safe keeping, and now regret it, are J. D. Taylor, who had \$3,000; Rayne, of Pennsylvania, \$1,000; Boutelle, of

Maine, \$1,500; Hermann, of Oregon, \$2,500; and Pickler, of South Dakota, \$2,500. Several Representatives have left their salaries undrawn with the Sergeant-at-Arms since last March. Others are two or three months behind. Altogether, no such glaring exposure of haphazard business methods has been known for many years at the capitol, and it is a pity that the blind confidence

The Sergeant-at-Arms, the latter was equally distrustful of his cashier, and the way was made open and inviting for embezzlement.

The Sergeant-at-Arms was scarcely able to realize to-day what had happened, and his bland confidence in his deputy came out in everything he said. "I have never had any reason before to

subject Mr. Silcott," he remarked. "He went to New-York Saturday, stating that he was going to make some large collections of money. On his arrival there he telegraphed his wife and to this office that he would return on Monday. We did not think anything of his absence until Tuesday